

Town celebrates Don Beers: a dedicated 'star'

By Susanna Sheehan
Clipper Editor

Duxbury honored its longtime harbormaster, Don Beers, at a festive retirement party last week at the senior center.

Beers, who retired last month after 38 years as a fulltime harbormaster, was feted as a dedicated town employee whose commitment to the public's safety on Duxbury Bay and beach was parallel to none. The town offered Beers "best wishes for smooth seas and fair winds" in his retirement and celebrated him with cards, remembrances and a cake.

Beer's long service was recognized with a resolution from the Board of Selectman and the town manager. He also received two proclamations from the state legislature – one from Representative Josh Cutler and one from state Senator Patrick O'Connor and recognition from Congress. A staff member from US Representative Bill Keating's office presented Beers with a citation. He also received a large gold fire chief's helmet shield with the harbormaster's insignia from Duxbury Fire Chief Kevin Nord.



Don Beers receives congratulations from Chuck Leonard, president of DBMS, and Jack Kent, of Bayside Marine.

Photo by Deni Johnson

Beer's tireless service as Duxbury's harbormaster for nearly four decades was a theme repeated by the town officials who spoke at the party; their speeches both honored Beers' intense devotion to his job but also offered good humored jokes about the man they had all come to know so well over time.

The resolution from selectmen and Town Manager René Read offered Beers the town's "heartfelt thanks for his many years of dedicated service to the town."

"Donald C. Beers III... has served the town of Duxbury with distinction in accomplishing the mission of providing safe and appropriate access to the bay, shore and beach," the resolution stated. "He has dealt with everything Mother Nature has sent his way, from many nor'easters to Great White sharks. Don has

earned his retirement."

Read recalled with humor his first and very memorable interaction with Beers, which came soon after he started his job as town manager in 2013.

Read said Beers came up to him and asked how his job was going. "I said, 'It's great. I love working here. It's awesome.' He said 'Good. Because you're going to have to close the beach in three weeks – just two weeks before the Fourth of July!'"

On a more serious note, Read told Beers: "I will always be grateful to you for all you've taught me on a wide array of subjects – from launching boats, harbor regulations beach management, Piping Plovers, Great White sharks and everything in between. I and everyone in this room really had a lot of fun working with you over these years and I consider it an honor and a privilege to have had that experience."

Town officials noted Beers' incredible commitment to his job, from the early years when he used his own fourwheel drive vehicle to patrol the beach and town landings to his more recent tenacity in getting the federal government to release the funds to dredge Duxbury's anchorage and channel.

“Don was a very vocal and robust advocate for the town of Duxbury for coastal resilience, safe harbors and dredging. He worked really hard over the years to make that happen,” said Mike Jackman, Keating’s representative.

Deputy Chief Stephen McDonald, who spoke in place of Police Chief Matthew Clancy who was away at training, said he knew from experience the type of person and personality it took to be a harbormaster and that not everyone was cut out to do the job. He was once a harbormaster himself. Also, since he was in the Coast Guard for 30 years, McDonald said he had a lot of experience visiting ports throughout the country and world.

“I understand the importance of this position and fully appreciate the complexities and challenges that it offers,” said McDonald. “The harbormaster position is staffed by a certain person who has responded to a calling. This calling is one that demands a strong will, critical decision- making and a heavy desire to protect our nation’s waterways and the people who use them. This calling put harbormasters on front lines of public safety every day, very often at great risk of personal physical peril.”



The Beers family stands proudly with the guest of honor. (L to R) Kim and her husband Jake (son), Amy (wife), Josh (son), Don Beers holding granddaughter Hadley, Caroline (Josh’s wife), Adam (son) with his wife Jill and Jackie Beers, Beer’s mother.

Photos by Deni Johnson



Beers gets a warm hug from oysterman Don Merry, owner of Merry Oysters. Don Merry is a lifelong resident of Duxbury and has a long history as a fisherman and oysterman in Duxbury Bay, Beers’ former “backyard” as he used to say.



Beers cuts the cake that wishes him “Smooth Seas and Fair Winds” on his retirement.



Fire Chief Kevin Nord, Captain Brian Monahan, Firefighters Alex Merry and Keith Nette present Beers with a “Harbormaster Chief” fire helmet plaque.

McDonald said that it takes a certain person to be a successful harbormaster, one who rises to the challenges of the job. Beers was one of those people, said McDonald, adding that "Don ranks in top 10 of all harbormasters and port directors that I've had the pleasure of working with."

"I can tell you that this community should consider itself fortunate to have had Don on the job for so many years," McDonald continued. "He's a consummate professional and one who personifies the word dedication. He took his job personally. By this I mean that the safety and health of Duxbury beach and waterways was his personal responsibility, which Don dedicated himself to every day, rain or shine, fair weather or foul weather."

McDonald said he will miss Beers at the police meetings, joking that he will also miss the harbormaster's "detailed and lengthy updates."

Duxbury Fire Chief Kevin Nord said he first recognized Beers in the late 1970s during an EMT training class, which he thought was unusual at the time.

"He's got this booming voice, 'command presence' we call it in the fire service," said Nord. "I was (wondering) 'Who is that?' It was the harbormaster and the kid next to me says, 'What's he doing here?' but that's a testament to who he is and what he wanted to do. He wanted to learn everything about the job and make the job as safe as possible. And that's kind of unheard of for a harbormaster."

Nord said Beers was very helpful when he started in 2004 to assist him in understanding the uniqueness of Duxbury bay and the ocean and the areas of flooding in town. "We'd be on the phone as the nor'easter was coming in, (wondering) what it's going to do. He had no crystal ball but he made me believe he had one," said Nord. "Don was a hands-on manager. He didn't stand back. He jumped right in."

"Everyone realizes that there's someone who comes along every once in a while who's really a star and that's truly Don," Nord said.